

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 SSO-00 L-03 HA-05 PA-01 CA-01
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FM AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6081

C O N F I D E N T I A L PRAGUE 2290

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS:NHSHUM, CVIS
SUBJECT: ASYLUM APPLICANTS SEEKING TO REMAIN IN EMBASSY

REF.: STATE 203300

1. ON THE MORNING OF AUGUST 25 EIGHT MEMBERS OF A SLOVAK ROMAN CATHOLIC FAMILY ENTERED THE CONSULAR SECTION OF THE EMBASSY AND ASKED TO SPEAK WITH A CONSULAR OFFICER. THEY SAID THEY FELT THEY WERE BEING PURSUED AND THAT SHOULD THEY LEAVE THE EMBASSY THEY WOULD BE SHOT BY THE CZECHOSLOVAK POLICE. THEY REQUESTED ASSISTANCE IN DEPARTING CZECHOSLOVAKIA FOR AUSTRIA, WHERE THEY HOPED TO OBTAIN ASYLUM.

2. WHEN THE CONSULAR OFFICER EXPLAINED THAT THERE IS NOTHING THE EMBASSY CAN DO TO ASSIST CZECHOSLOVAK CITIZENS TO LEAVE THEIR COUNTRY, THE ENTIRE GROUP KNELT IN HIS OFFICE AND BEGAN TO PRAY AND WEEP. FURTHER DISCUSSION YIELDED THE INFORMATION THAT THE FAMILY WAS BADLY IN DEBT, AND THAT A SON IN THE CZECHOSLOVAK ARMY HAD BEEN PUNISHED SEVERAL TIMES FOR ABSENCE WITHOUT LEAVE.

3. THE CONSULAR OFFICER REQUESTED THAT THE FAMILY RETURN TO THE WAITING ROOM. THEY RELUCTANTLY AGREED
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TO DO SO. SEVERAL MEMBERS FELL TO THEIR KNEES AND PRAYED ALONG THE WAY.

4. CONOFF AGAIN EXPLAINED INABILITY OF EMBASSY TO ASSIST AND UNDESIRABILITY OF THEIR REMAINING LONGER IN THE CHANCERY. HE SUGGESTED THEY CONTACT A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RED CROSS AND PERSUADED THE FATHER TO SPEAK BY

TELEPHONE WITH THE PRAGUE REPRESENTATIVE OF THAT ORGANIZATION. FATHER BECAME GREATLY AGITATED DURING HIS CONVERSATION AND SHOUTED ABUSE AT THE REPRESENTATIVE, WHO HAD EXPRESSED DISBELIEF OF HIS ACCOUNT OF PERSECUTION.

5. AT LENGTH, CONOFF PERSUADED FATHER THAT A PERSONAL CALL AT THE RED CROSS OFFICE MIGHT BE MORE EFFECTIVE AND OFFERED PERSONALLY TO ESCORT THE FAMILY THERE. AT THE CHANCERY ENTRANCE, THE FATHER STATED THAT HE DID NOT WISH TO BE ACCOMPANIED, AND THE FAMILY LEFT THE BUILDING PEACEFULLY WITHOUT AROUSING APPARENT INTEREST ON THE PART OF THE POLICE.

6. FAMILY SAID THEY FELT THERE WAS NO CONNECTION BETWEEN THEIR RELIGION AND THEIR ALLEGED PERSECUTION. POST HAD REVIEWED CONTENTS OF REFTEL AND HAS ESTABLISHED POLICY FOR DEALING WITH SUCH CASES, COPY OF WHICH BEING POUCHED TO DEPARTMENT.
BYRNE

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